

From the Portland Business Journal

:<http://www.bizjournals.com/portland/blog/2012/10/superfund-study-gets-epas-enviros.html>

Superfund study gets EPA's, River Keeper's attention

Portland Business Journal by Andy Giegerich , Business Journal staff writer

Date: Monday, October 29, 2012, 2:05pm PDT



Andy Giegerich

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As businesses question how much Willamette River cleanup is needed, per the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program, other interests say the process is indeed moving in the right direction.

Those interests include one river-centric environmentalist and the EPA itself, which maintains that there's plenty of proof that the agency used the right measurements to gauge toxicity levels in fish consumed by humans — that's a primary indicator of whether water is polluted.

Bear with me as I provide a trace of background here. At issue is whether federal officials are using relevant data to determine toxicity in fish that are consumed after being caught near the Superfund site. Any changes in the way toxicity is measured in fish caught in the harbor could lower Superfund clean-up costs, which are estimated, at the high end, at around \$2.2 billion.

In last week's paper, I wrote about a study backed by three major waterfront businesses that called for the EPA to reconsider the way it measures fish toxicity. Representatives from **Gunderson LLC**, Schnitzer Steel Industries Co. and Vigor Industrial LLC contended that the EPA didn't actually interview Willamette River anglers before estimating the degree to which people eat fish caught from the river. The agency instead based its estimates on national and tribal fishing data.

Those companies fear the EPA is creating clean-up remedies and costs on incomplete data.

One point of contention is whether those who regularly consume Willamette River fish eat more resident fish — those inside the Superfund site — a group that includes bass and catfish, or migratory fish such as salmon.

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When I wrote the piece, I'd honored an embargo set by the businesses to not release the story until Friday morning. That's two days past my deadline, meaning I couldn't talk to the EPA and environmentalists to get their thoughts.

Since then, I've circled back with the EPA and Travis Williams, executive director of the Willamette Riverkeeper group, who were more than happy to provide more context.

Williams pointed out that he believes a pretext of the new study that only about 78 residents would eat enough resident fish daily to provide meaningful health data is flawed.

"It's important to know that a group of people are eating high quantities of PCB laden fish, which is a key fact that on its own demonstrates a very real need to clean up Portland Harbor," Williams said. "What surveys like this do not do is capture how many other people would likely consume higher quantities of fish from the Willamette if the river was free of contaminants such as PCBs, heavy metals, DDE, and oil based products."

Lori Cohen, the associate director of the EPA's office of environmental clean-up, said the office is still looking into the fish consumption questions before issuing final cleanup rules.

However, she cautioned that more studies could delay the cleanup process. The EPA first deemed the harbor a Superfund site in 2000.

"We're at a pivotal point in the project," she said, noting that the agency has worked with the Lower Willamette Group of business representatives as it considers cleanup options. "I believe we're at a place where we can pull that information together and come up with a plan. We want to get past any disputes. Fish consumption is one important factor in our analysis, but it's one of many factors we need to consider. We don't want to get into a situation where there are more delays."

Cohen added that the EPA also wants to take into account those who are exposed to the river from both the angling and recreational standpoints.

"As the river gets cleaned up, there could be more uses of it," she said.

Dave Harvey, Gunderson's director of health and safety, and Rep. Kurt Schrader, a Democrat who's become engrossed with river clean-up issues, told me last week the businesses have no intention of delaying the cleanup process.

The Superfund designation requires cleanup of the 10-mile Willamette stretch between the Fremont Bridge and Sauvie Island. The designation results from pollution that, for decades, poured into the river from older-line waterfront manufacturers.

Andy Giegerich covers government, law, health care and sports business.



Fw: MEDIA INQUIRY - Brattle Fish Consumption Report /Portland Harbor Cleanup - Andy Giegerich/Portland Business Journal
Judy Smith to: Alanna Conley

10/30/2012 08:23 AM

Good morning. I thought you might want to see this. Judy

— Forwarded by Judy Smith/R10/USEPA/US on 10/30/12 08:22 AM —

From: Suzanne Skadowski/R10/USEPA/US
To: R10 Press Team
Date: 10/29/12 03:37 PM
Subject: Re: MEDIA INQUIRY- Brattle Fish Consumption Report/Portland Harbor Cleanup - Andy Giegerich/Portland Business Journal

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Suzanne Skadowski
Community Outreach and Public Information
Environmental Protection Agency
206-553-6689

Mark Macintyre	Who took the call/e-mail: MacIntyre X-7302 Dat...	10/26/2012 05:11:14 PM
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From: Mark Macintyre/R10/USEPA/US
To: Marianne Holsman/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Mark Macintyre/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Judy Smith/R10/USEPA/US, Jeff Philip/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Suzanne Skadowski/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Hanady Kader/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Cyndi Grafe/R10/USEPA/US,
Cc: Chip Humphrey/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Elizabeth Allen/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Deb Yamamoto/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Kristine Koch/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Judy Smith/R10/USEPA/US, Alanna Conley/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, STEVENS-SCHWENGER.Joanie@deq.state.or.us, DANAB Marcia <DANAB.Marcia@deq.state.or.us>, "Nina Deconcini" <DECONCINI.Nina@deq.state.or.us>, Anthony Barber/R10/USEPA/US@EPA, Rick Albright/R10/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 10/26/2012 05:11 PM
Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY- Brattle Fish Consumption Report/Portland Harbor Cleanup - Andy Giegerich/Portland Business Journal

Who took the call/e-mail: MacIntyre X-7302

Date and Time: 10/26/12 3:50PM

Media Outlet: Portland Business Journal (Portland, OR)

Reporter: Andy Giegerich, 503-219-3419, agiegerich@bizjournals.com

Topic/Story Angle: Reporter is looking for EPA "reaction" to a fish consumption report presented by Brattle Group at a Portland Harbor Cleanup stakeholder meeting

Deadline: COB 10/26/12

Resolution: **CLOSED** Lori Cohen, Associate Director, R10 Superfund office, and I took the call from Lori's office. We restated our key messages about wanting to honor the dispute framework yet be responsive about this important cleanup. We hit hard that we were at a "pivotal moment" with the cleanup and firmly believe that it's time to get the bulk of the cleanup moving forward. We also mentioned that it is our "mandate" to protect people and the environment not just today, but into the future. We also acknowledged that we had just received the study yesterday and will be reviewing the science, methodology and conclusions before deciding what to do with it. Call was concluded in approx. 10 minutes. Should run online on Monday(10/29) and in following print edition.

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